

My name is Lizette Colón. I am a Counselor at Hostos Community College, CUNY and a member of the Professional Staff Congress, American Federation of Teachers Local 2334.

First of all, I want to thank every single organization that has taken the time to educate and organize us citywide regarding this fight, especially the NYC Organization for Public Service Retirees, the Cross Union Retirees Committee (CROC) , COMRO, and the Physicians for a National Health Program (PNHP).

I come today to urge the City Council to **VOTE NO to amend Administrative Code 12-126.**

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly share my outrage for all the mistreatment and distress that our NYC retirees have been subjected to for the past year and a half, by the City representatives, elected officials and top MLC unions leaders avoiding to look for real and long term solutions to this issue.

Through these past months I have learned many painful truths:

- The unfair unbalanced power of the municipal labor council (MLC).
- The misuse of the Health Stabilization Fund to pay off a bad deal behind closed doors between Mayor De Blasio and the top 4 leaders of the Municipal Labor Council (MLC) Mulgrew, Garrido, Nespoli, and Floyd.
- The terrible proposed solution of putting all of us into a Medicare Advantage Plan that is neither Medicare nor is an Advantage but rather inferior option to “save money”.
- Outrage knowing that by the proposed switch to Medicare Advantage the City is not making any significant savings but rather just affecting retirees.
- Outrage to know that if thousands of NYC union retirees, with low pensions, will not be able to afford the opt out option and will end up with only access to an inferior privatized medical plan.

As a result , I just feel:

- Outraged by the lack of information and education outreach efforts in our communities, about the facts behind what has brought us here and to this point.
- Outraged for all the times in which we have been gaslighted in this process.
- Outraged from observing, as well as witnessing city officials, elected officials and ‘so- called union leaders” on how they twist information to protect their own interests and not the ones of the people or members they represent.
- Outrage to see that while sound alternatives have been shared with all of you as decision makers, you keep asking us to “keep sharing more possible alternatives”

and saying meeting after meeting that “ we cannot tell you our positions as we are still considering them.”

None of us in this chamber today need to remind you that you all represent us , your constituents. The ones who elected you. Meeting after meeting, email after email, phone call after phone call, we have reiterated what we need and that we do not want so-called “choices of plan” through inferior Medicare Advantage Plans. All that while our Mayor has kept pounding the need for ‘austerity measures’ narrative when our city has the money. [There are sound and viable alternatives](#). My union, the PSC, has shown that the money is there, in reserves that are larger than ever, to keep the existing coverage. I urge you to consider the PSC’s proposal pursuing real efforts to contain rising healthcare costs.

So for God’s sake, please listen and honor what we, as city workers and retirees, have been saying since this battle started 18 months ago: we have served our beloved city well, despite working under the eternal narrative of ‘austerity measures’. We knew that at least when we would retire, we would have the promised healthcare benefits. What we perfectly understand now is that the administrative code 12-126 has protected our healthcare benefits since 1967. There is no need to change it.

So do not delay your decision. Do the right thing : Vote No to any proposed amendment to code 12-126. Stand up with the retirees!

On a personal note, as a Puerto Rican, It is painful and pathetic that this devastating bill to Amend the Administrative Code 12-126 is being co-sponsored by two Elected Latina Council Members: Council Member De La Rosa (representing Washington Heights) and Diana Ayala(representing El Barrio) affecting the majority of their constituents, amongst the most vulnerable in the city. All that under the request of a so-called Democrat, African American Mayor, Eric Adams, who during his campaign, correctly called Medicare Advantage a “bait-and-switch.” Now that he is under the influence of insurance company lobbyists, he is using that bait-and-switch to take away hard-earned and hard-won medical benefits from retired civil servants who have supported the labor movement their entire working and retired lives. Furthermore, he is using it as an awful leverage tactic to hold hostage our upcoming bargaining contracts negotiations. Despicable!

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